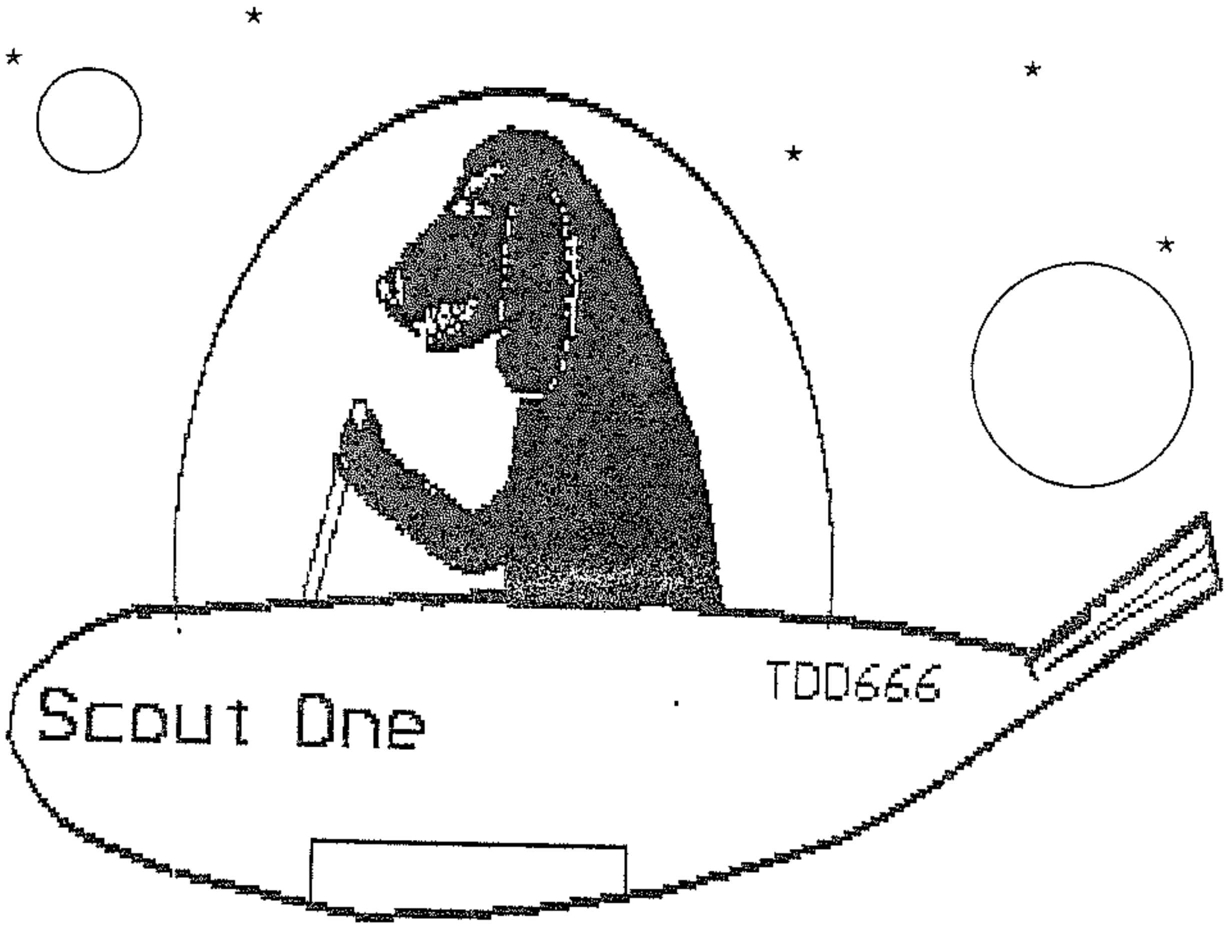
I/O

The Latrobe Valley Computer Users Group Newsletter

August 1991
Issue No. 10

The Latrobe Valley Computer Users Group is open to all interested in Personal Computing, from absolute beginners to experts. You don't need to own a computer to join. Family membership is $10 per year. For more information, ring (051) 76 6199 BH, 74 1605 AH.

DOGS IN SPACE!!!



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This Newsletter is the publication of the Latrobe Valley Computer Users Group. It is published monthly.

Members are encouraged to contribute material for the Newsletter, in ASCII format, if possible. It can be uploaded to a BBS ((051) 22 2122) or given to the editor (76 1730). We will accept classified adveritsements for inclusion in the classified section. There will be no charge to members for ads of a non-commercial nature.

Commercial advertisements will be accepted for a nominal charge, and the advertiser must state clearly the expected remuneration for any products or services offered. The Latrobe Valley Computer Users Group does not endorse or recommend any products or services included in commercial classified advertisements.

Please note that material published in the Newsletter represents the opinions of the authors, and does not carry the endorsement of the Newsletter Editor or the Latrobe Valley Computer Users Group.

PHONE HELP

Some members of the LVCUG have offered to assist other members with PC related problems over the telephone (evenings, please). They are:

Phil Carter	22 2382
Paul Dzwonkowski	63 1504
Ralph Edgar	74 0987
Graeme Matheson	74 9419
Theresa Tate	74 1605
Martin Taylor	76 1730

The Latrobe Valley Computer Users Group is a non-profit organisation formed to promote the usage and understanding of Personal Computers. It is open to all age groups and does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, age, creed, or national origin.

The Group meets monthly on the last Tuesday of each month at 7:30 p.m. at the Traralgon Senior Citizens Club building, corner of Princes Hwy. and Whittaker's Rd. (Victory Park), Traralgon. Meetings are open to the public.

Family membership is $10 per year. This entitles members to receive the monthly Newsletter by mail, as well as the right to use the Group's "Help Lines". We request a donation of $2 each meeting per family to help cover costs (venue fees, coffee and tea, etc.).

For more information, ring 74 6199 BH, 74 1605 AH.

The Committee of Management Consists of the Following:

Phil Carter..............................President

Martin Taylor.............Vice President

Theresa Tate........................Secretary

Paul Dzwonkowski......Asst. Secretary

Graeme Matheson..............Treasurer

Sheryl Taylor........Newsletter Editor

Ross Cheater....Committee Member

Jenny Poon........Committee Member

From The Editor's Desk...

I know that in the last newsletter, I said I was going overseas and wouldn't be heard from for two months. Well, I am still going overseas, but I still have time to get a few words in before I go...

I just arrived home from the inaugural meeting of the Latrobe Valley Computer Users Group Programming SIG (Special Interest Group). The idea for this SIG was put forth by two members, Peter Doyle and Darren Crick. They felt that the Group catered too much towards beginners in computing, and those with a bit more knowledge (but not enough to be called programmers) about computing were left out.

They proposed this SIG, it was discussed at a committee level, and it was put to the general membership to see if there was anyone else interested in it. Turns out, there were quite a few potential programmers out there! Jenny Poon was able to offer the facilities at the Traralgon Neighbourhood House, and it was decided that the LVCUG Programming SIG would meet on the first Wednesday of each month, 7:30 pm. But, I digress.

As I began earlier, before I so rudely interrupted myself, I just returned from the first meeting of the SIG. I didn't expect much, as I have had experiences in the past where a shower of hands would indicate interest in something, until the time actually arrived and no one showed up. But to my surprise, almost all interested parties were there, 15 people, all up.

We each talked a bit about our interest and experiences in programming. Now while I certainly have the interest, I certainly lack the experience, and my sum total knowledge of programming could fit within the full-stop at the end of this sentence. And while there were a couple with my level of programming knowledge, there were others yet who were way ahead of us. But, even they were not "experts".

Those with some knowledge of programming are looking for a bit of support. They want to be able to confer with others on the same or higher level, when they get stuck on a problem. Those like me, on the other hand, are looking to learn a bit. Now, the idea *of this SIG is not to be a class in Elementary Programming, but the good thing about it is that those who have "been there and done that" can point the rest of us in the right direction with regard to tutorials and the like.*

There are supposed to be some excellent Shareware language tutorials, on Turbo Pascal, for example, which is the language of choice of most of our SIG members. But, it is not to suggest that we will be limiting our SIG to only one language. On the contrary, anyone can program in whatever language they prefer, and attempt to enlighten the rest of us! However, it does make it easier initially to have a focus, and as I said, most of those present who had actually done any programming had used, or were presently using, Turbo Pascal. So, Turbo Pascal it is, for the time being, at least.

Now, if anyone out there is willing to write anything, I would be most happy to dedicate a portion of the Newsletter to the Programming SIG. The important thing to keep in mind here is that this material would be written by persons interested in programming, for the same. It is not intended as a tutorial. I mean, you wouldn't expect to pick up "Flying" magazine, and expect it to teach you to become a pilot, right? (I am including this in here now in the hope of heading off complaints that it is too complicated for the average person.)

Anyway, I was tired tonight, ate dinner late, and wasn't sure if I should go the the SIG meeting or not. But then I realised that I wouldn't be able to go again until October, so I threw all caution to the wind, mustered up all my strength, and went for it. I'm glad I did, because even in the relatively short time that I actually spent there, I did manager to learn something about programming.▪

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LADIES GARTERS FOR SALE - 10¢

For those amongst you who have braved the world on the local Bulletin Boards and have been game enough to enter the Graffiti Board, you would have sat in the aura of a mystical being called The Dark Dog. You may have wondered why some seem to treat him as a demigod and yet others despise and hate him with every fiber of their being. Perhaps if I tell you of his birth place and the early wars that he had to fight, you may begin to understand what it's all about.

Some years ago the local BBS scene was quite different. In those days we had two BBS in Moe, called Valicomm line one and two. In Traralgon we had a BBS called Eastern Plains. Most messages and files were handled by the Moe boards. On the other hand, Eastern Plains was more for fun and games. One of the games on that board was Trade Wars.

At first glance this game seems harmless enough. You log in under an assumed name, hence the birth of The Dark Dog. The object of the game is to become the master of the universe and to eventually overthrow the Cabal, who are a computer generated race of aliens.

After the initial log-in The Dark Dog thought to himself, "What a boring game this is." After all, playing a game over a modem is more text based than graphical. You need to let your imagination run wild. You have to imagine what your spaceship and crew look like. There is no sound or whiz bang graphics to help you here. It's all in the mind. The computer only sets the rules of play.

Upon his first move from one sector to another, all hell broke loose. You see, The Dark Dog had not scanned the space ahead, and had flown straight into a space mine, left by a player calling himself The Spanish Inquisition. The Dark Dog saw his family and crew sucked from his ship as the vacuum of space pulled everthing out through the gaping hole in her side. This image burned deep into The Dark Dog's mind.

Who is this Spanish Inquisition? A quick check of the scoreboard reveals a player with more zeros after his score than over Pearl Harbor on the 7th of December 1941. So while he has a score in the millions, all other players in the game are struggling to stay alive.

That night the first of many messages was left on the Graffiti Board to the Spanish Inquisition. This one threatened to have his guts for garters. Next day come a reply " Before you threaten to make my internal organs into ladies underwear, remember to whom you speak." The Dark Dog took this as a declaration of war.

Over the next few weeks The Dark Dog played the game over and over. Slowly learning how to trade between planets and space ports, learning where to hide and where the other players kept their planets and loot. Over this period war would break out between the lesser players and The Dark Dog. We all died many times.

Yet the Spanish Inquisition would fly around seemingly at will, for he had with him thousands of fighters for protection. We would only have a few hundred at most. He would tease us. Some days he would attack us just enough to weaken us. Other days he would show no mercy. Between him and the Cabal, life was tough in outer space.

After a few weeks, it was realized that the Spanish Inquisition kept his planets and stores behind three heavily guarded sectors in space. Each sector was guarded by thousands of fighters. It would take a long time to mass a fighter fleet big enough to break through that sort of protection.

The Dark Dog and another player called Mr Walker teamed up. It was more of a truce than a team. They needed time and a lull in the fighting to grow strong enough for an all-out attack on the Spanish Inquisition's defenses. As the Dark Dog grew stronger and stronger he watched and waited. Then one night one of the key sectors was heavily attacted by the Cabal, leaving only a few hundred fighters protecting the doorway. It was time to attack.

Rounding up all his fighters and leaving his planets unprotected, The Dark Dog launched an attack, breaching the defenses with only a few fighters to spare. Behind these defenses, he found hundreds of planets full of loot and fighters for the taking. After taking his fill he called to his team mate Mr Walker to come on in and have his fill.

The next day The Dark Dog found that he had been betrayed by his team mate. He found that he had been attacked and near killed by this fiend. Never again would The Dark Dog trust another. That night was spent tracking down and executing this traitor, Mr Walker. When it was all finished, The Dark Dog found himself on the wrong side of the defenses. All alone with little to defend himself, he swore revenge on all who would cross his path. The next few weeks he spent regrouping and rebuilding his forces.

After a lot of soul searching he didn't find God, he found he *was* God. Spell Dog backwards and you will see what I mean. With this new outlook on life, he sat and waited once more.

He didn't have to wait long. Once more the Cabal did a number on the Spanish Inquisition's defenses. Once more and alone this time, The Dark Dog flew into action. This time he stayed →

inside the fortress. This time he was hunting for the demon himself. The battle raged for days on end. Then in the early hours of the morning they met face to face.

Death came quick to the evil and ruthless dictator of space. While The Dark Dog feasted on the soft flesh and the hard bones of his prey, it said that in all the corners of the universe people were heard to say " The King is dead. Long live the new King. Long live The Dark Dog!"

It wasn't long after that, that Eastern Plains closed down and with it went the game Trade Wars. The Dark Dog has been King ever since. Nobody has had the courage to take him on. Yet as we speak the game of Trade Wars is once again raging on Cyber Ph 222122. Is there anybody out there brave enough to take on The Dark Dog on his home ground? Is there anybody out there with enough wit to stop his barking on the Graffiti Board? ▪

- The Master Of The Dog.

HIMEM.SYS vs QEMM386 Which One?

Himem.Sys was devised by Microsoft to break the 640k barrier and use high memory for applications such as Windows 3.0 and Lotus 1-2-3. I have had problems with Himem. I am always having to change the config.sys, because Himem takes up just enough memory to abort the execution of some programs which don't use high memory. It gives the message, "Sorry, not enough memory!" So, I thought I might speed up the process by writing a batch file that changed the config.sys, but I have to reboot in order to get the system to accept the changes.

If you want to use Himem.Sys, you need any amount of RAM above 640k. It is simple to install - on a blank line in your Config.sys, type:

```
device=Himem.Sys
```

If I am correct, I believe it comes with DOS, so make sure Himem is in your root directory.

Instead of mucking around with Himem, though, you can purchase an excellent program at a decent price. For $110, you can get the Quarterdeck Extended Memory Manager and Manifest (Manifest is a memory monitor).

The special feature of QEMM is that instead of loading itself into the first 640k, it puts itself, DOS, and other RAM resident programs into high memory. It keeps the first 640k free for program execution, which eliminates the need for tedious modification of the config.sys. I bought it and I recommend it for anyone who has 384k to 128 megs of extended memory. ▪

- Anthony Beckett

Super VGA... Who Needs It?

Over the last 6 to 8 months the price of IBM AT clones has dropped dramatically. Once a 80286 with VGA, a megabyte of RAM and a 40 Megabyte fixed disk sold for over $3,000. Now you can pick one up for less than $2,000, if you shop around. Also, this includes Super VGA.

What is Super VGA? Well, from what I can gather, SVGA is a VGA card that supposedly has greater resolution than VGA. Currently VGA supports a resolution up to 800 by 600 lines and up to 256 colors on screen out of a palette of 256,000. SVGA supposedly supports up to 1024 by 760 lines. However, the software that supports this new resolution is almost non-existent as there have been no specific standards laid down. Those programmes that *do* support SVGA usually have drivers written *specifically for certain cards*. If you have a different card, then the chances are your programme will lockup or at best, may look very unstable and washy.

IBM has developed a new graphics standard called XGA (which stands for Extended Graphics Array). Reports say it exceeds the standards supported by VGA. No doubt the Taiwanese manufacturers will gear up to start producing 3rd party hardware to ameliorate XGA. But don't hold your breath waiting. IBM apparently have moves afoot to licence the new standard and as such I reckon the clone makers will have to pay for it.

So, if you are in the market for a new PC, I would recommend sticking with conventional VGA. It is a recognised standard within the software and hardware industry and, therefore, is widely supported. And if possible, purchase a PC with a known brand of VGA card such as Paradise or Video 7 (VEGA). I had the misfortune to purchase an unknown brand VGA card and it failed to work properly on any programme that supported VGA. I swapped it for another no-brand card with the same results. In the end I cut my losses and purchased a Vega VGA card which has shown no incompatibility problems at all. ▪

- Martin Taylor

BOILED FRUIT CAKE RECIPE

INGREDIENTS:

1 CUP OF BUTTER	1 TABLESPOON BROWN SUGAR
1 CUP OF SUGAR	1 TEASPOON SALT
1 CUP OF MIXED DRIED FRUIT	1 TEASPOON BAKING SODA
1 CUP OF WATER	50g WALNUTS
4 LARGE EGGS	1 SMALL BOTTLE LEMON JUICE
1 TABLESPOON BROWN SUGAR	1 LARGE BOTTLE WHISKEY (ANY BRAND)

MAKING

Place dried fruit, water and half a cup of sugar in a small saucepan and boil for 15 mins. Pour whiskey in to glass and sample for texture. Get a large mixing bowl and check whiskey quality Get electric mixer and plug in Take another glass of whiskey to check warmth Turn on mixer and beat butter in large fluffy bowls Taste whiskey for good measure Add spoontea of soda baking to bowl of mixing Taste whiskey for anything you like Turn off mixture and break 2 lleggs, add to bowl of saucepan Taste whiskey to make sure it's still there Toss fruit ("Gayly" if desired) into saucebowl mixpan Taste whiskey twice Mix on the turner and loose fruit with pliers Toss salt in screwdriver and bowl mix thoroughly with whiskey More taste whiskey in soda baking Grease washing machine lightly and turn 360 degrees Put mix in dryer and spin dry wet rinse Turn off turner and whiskey bowl mix well Piur mix ober bench and wipe dry stir well Turn off dryer and open washing machine bowl microwave Sink dast of hiskey wid care Batter mix into toaster and lightly stir with towel Whiskey drunk gone all Mix phone with call bottle whiskey shop Fall off floor, washing mixed and hung to dry in microwave Bottle tossed into saucepan and boiled for 3hrs Fall asleep before boss comes home!!. Have a hic, burp, good morevening dashling. ■

From the kitchen of Bill Stores

Advertisement

Maintenance of Floppy Disk Drives

Cleaning and maintaining your floppy drives is as important as looking after yourself. Neglecting regular maintenance will not only cost you money for repairs, but inconvenience when your computer breaks down.

In fact, the floppy drives can be easily maintained and there are two methods which are used. Firstly the manual method, in which you use a cleaning swab with a liquid such as pure alcohol or freon. This method requires you to open the system unit to expose the drive and in many cases, also requires you to remove and partially disassemble the drive itself. The manual method can result in a better job, but often the work required is not worth the difference. Secondly, the "cleaning disk" method which comes in two types - one is the dry type, the other the wet type. The dry type relies on the abrasive material on the cleaning disk to clean the read/write head. I do not recommend this type, as the dry disk can actually damage the heads if used improperly or too often. The wet type uses a liquid that is squirted onto the disk as the cleaning agent, and it is the safest method to use.

How often should the drives be cleaned? It depends a lot on the environment the computer system is in, and also the people who use it. In a clean room environment and strictly controlled access, once a year should suffice. In office and normal usage, then it is wise to consider a monthly to quarterly cleaning. In areas where heavy smoking is encountered, it is better to stick to a minimum of monthly cleaning.

Don't Wait Till DOS tells you...

Abort, Retry, Ignore

By then, your drives would probably have collected so much dirt that you may have to "scrub" the heads!

If you have a computer and you are interested in learning more, feel free to contact:

Chris Eng
PH: 445501
Free advice/demonstration to residents of Sale only.

Archiving Programs

Have you ever had a problem with how to store files that are only used occasionally, or hard disk backups? Well, there are a group of programs out that can do this for you. They are called archiving programs.

Archiving programs gather a number of files, compress them, and then store them in one large file called an archive. All Bulletin Board Systems use them. For one, they save space, and secondly, all the files related to a particular program can't be lost or separated.

If you have data files with your word processors or databases, they can be placed into an archive, and as you work with these data files they can be updated into the archive, overwriting the old file. Each archive can be passworded, depending on the archiving program used. You can delete single files from an archive, extract individual files or multiple files for working on or whatever.

There are about 5 different archivers in circulation at the present time. They are PKZIP, LHARC, ARC, PAK and ARJ. These programmes create archives with these default extensions ZIP, LZH, ARC, PAK and ARJ respectively. For now we will deal with PKZIP, one of the more popular archivers.

Say I have a group of files in a directory called C:\WP. If I type PKZIP -A WPFILES *.* from the DOS prompt, Pkzip will create an archive called WPFILES.ZIP, and will compress and store in it all files in that directory. The -A means to Add. Or you can type this:

```
PKZIP -A A:WPFILES *.*
```

This means to create a file called WPFILES.ZIP on the A Drive and add the files in the current directory to it.

After creating this file on the A drive, you may wish to add some more files to it, or perhaps a document that has been edited. You can type this:

```
PKZIP -A A:WPFILES LETTER.DOC.
```

Pkzip will add Letter.doc to the archive. If it already exists in the archive, it will overwrite it and return a message "updating archive".

OK. You have deleted all your files in the directory C:\WP. At some later date, you wish to retrieve the archived files and place them back into that directory. You can do it thus:

```
PKUNZIP A:WPFILES C:\WP
```

Notice the different command? This is the file that will *UNzip* the files, or extract them from the archive. *PKZIP* adds or creates archives. While Pkzip has two different programs to create and extract files, other archivers use the one program with different command line switches. But I digress.

The above command will extract all the files contained in an archive called WPFILES.ZIP on the A drive and place them in a directory called WP on Drive C. However, if you only wish to retrieve one file, do this:

```
PKUNZIP A:WPFILES LETTER.DOC
```

This will retrieve the file Letter.doc and place it into the currently logged directory.

```
PKUNZIP -V A:WPFILES LETTER.DOC
```

This will display Letter.doc if it exists.

You can also view the contents of an archive:

```
PKUNZIP -V A:WPFILES
```

This will list all files in the archive. This listing you will see shows the total number of files, their individual sizes, and total sizes, both compressed and uncompressed. The listings can be directed to the printer for reference or to a text file for later use.

File Sizes

Each archiver differs in speed, and the size to which it can reduce files. Generally speaking, LHARC is the "crunchiest" but is also the slowest. Pkzip is the quickest but doesn't squash the files as much. Some of these archivers are shareware. Pkzip is. Lharc isn't. It is public domain.

If you do a directory listing and the files contained a total of, say, 100kb in size, then you could reasonably expect to pack them into an archive of about 50 to 60kb in size. Handy, eh?

Menu Programs for Archivers

There are a few menu programs about that allow you manipulate the various archives. One is called SHEZ and should be available from the shareware library (if not we will endeavour to get it for anyone who wants it). This allows you to run the archivers from a menu so you can dipense with using commands from the DOS prompt to manage your archives.

History.

A few years ago, a company called System Enhancement Associates (SEA) created the first archiving programme called ARC. Sometime later a programmer, Phil Katz, created Pkarc and Pkxarc. Apparently it was more efficient than ARC, but SEA, feeling copyright was infringed, sued Katz. After an out of court settlement (Katz had to pay) he developed Pkzip. It used a different method, and was considerably quicker and more efficient than ARC. However, his method of compression was released into the public domain. I personally think Katz should have copyrighted Pkzip. But perhaps he, like most of us, are sick of the continued litigations between software companies.

Perhaps, instead of suing each other, the companies should spend that money on research and development instead of on lawyers. They are the only ones who benefit from all this. The end user suffers in restricted programs, costly software and slow development.

Later on, SEA released a new version of Arc that was considerably quicker than its previous versions.

Since that out of court settlement, other archivers have sprung up. Lharc, Arj, Pak and Zoo are but some. Perhaps they all owe something to Phil Katz... ■

- Martin Taylor

Classifieds

The Latrobe Valley Computer Users Group does not condone the unauthorised sale or exchange in any manner of commercial software. Only public domain and shareware may be freely exchanged within the group.

Non-commercial ads are free to members. For commercial ads, a $4 charge per issue applies. To place an ad, ring (051) 76 1730.

For Sale

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****

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Remember, the next meeting of the LVCUG will take place on 27 August 1991 at 7:30 p.m.